

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7563

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

INFO USINT DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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TAGS: PFOR, EG, UR

SUBJECT: CONTINUING EGYPTIAN-SOVIET "DIALOGUE"

REF: BEIRUT 4409

SUMMARY: EGYPTIAN-SOVIET PROPAGANDA BATTLE CONTINUES UNABATED IN BEIRUT PRESS, WITH SADAT--IN INTERVIEW CARRIED BY INDEPENDENT WEEKLY--VENTING HIS SPLEEN ON SOVS FOR THEIR ALLEGED UNWILLINGNESS PROVIDE ADEQUATE MILITARY SUPPORT TO EGYPT SINCE 1967, AND WITH SOVS--VIA LOCAL COMMUNIST WEEKLY--ACCUSING SADAT OF DESERTING SYRIA, PALESTINIANS AND ARAB CAUSE IN RETURN FOR FAVORS FROM AND RAPPROCHEMENT WITH US. END SUMMARY.

1. IN ANTICIPATED (REFTEL) INTERVIEW WITH SELIM LAWZI, PUBLISHER/EDITOR OF LOCAL WEEKLY NEWS MAGAZINE AL HAWADITH, CARRIED HERE APRIL 25, EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT SADAT DECLARED THAT CURRENT DIFFICULTIES IN EGYPTIAN-SOVIET RELATIONS GO BACK AS FAR AS "GRIM SUMMER" FOLLOWING WAR OF JUNE 1967, WHEN--"OUR AIR FORCE HAVING UNCLASSIFIED

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BEEN CRUSHED"AA NASSER APPEALED TO SOVS (VIA PRESIDENT PODGORNYY)

TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR EGYPT'S AIR DEFENSE UNDER SOV COMMANDER. SADAT SAID PODGORNYY AT FIRST AGREED, BUT CHANGED HIS MIND LATER SAME DAY AND TOLD NASSER USSR COULD NOT COMPLY. DURING 1970 WAR OF ATTRITION, SAID SADAT, "NASSER MADE SECRET VISIT TO MOSCOW AND RETURNED WITH SOVIET PROMISE TO SUPPLY EGYPT WITH SAM-3 MISSILES, TECHNICIANS" AND FIGHTER PLANES ABLE TO STRIKE DEEP IN ISRAELI TERRITORY. ACCORDING TO SADAT, SOVS RENEGED ON THIS PROMISE TOO: "THEY SENT THE MISSILES AND TECHNICIANS, BUT NO PLANES. ON MAY 1, 1970 NASSER BECAME IMPATIENT...AND MADE HIS LAST VISIT TO MOSCOW.... HIS (UNSUCCESSFUL) TALKS THERE FORCED HIM TO ACCEPT ROGERS INITIATIVE, A DECISION WHICH HE CONVEYED TO THE RUSSIANS DURING THE TALKS. WHEN HE GOT OFF THE PLANE (IN CAIRO), HE TOLD ME: 'THE RUSSIANS ARE A HOPELESS CASE.'"

2. SADAT TOLD LAWZI THAT AFTER BECOMING PRESIDENT HE TRAVELLED SECRETLY TO MOSCOW IN EARLY MAY 1971 FOR TALKS WITH SOV LEADERSHIP. "I RAISED THE QUESTION OF WARPLANES WHICH THEY HAD PROMISED TO SEND NASSER BUT DID NOT. I WAS THUNDERSTRUCK AT THEIR REPLY", WHICH WAS THAT SOVS WERE READY TO SUPPLY PLANES PROVIDED THEY WOULD NOT BE USED WITHOUT MOSCOW'S PERMISSION. SADAT SAID HE REFUSED THIS BECAUSE IT WOULD RESTRICT EGYPT'S FREEDOM OF ACTION. HE ALSO CLAIMED THAT SOV UNWILLINGNESS TO PROVIDE COMMANDER FOR EGYPTIAN AIR DEFENSES HAD TURNED OUT TO EGYPT'S ADVANTAGE BECAUSE IT FORCED EGYPTIAN ARMED FORCES TO TRAIN THEIR OWN EXPERIENCED COMMANDERS.

3. TURNING TO OTHER SUBJECTS, SADAT TOLD LAWZE THAT INTER-ARAB SOLIDARITY REMAINS STRONG AS RESULT OF OCTOBER WAR AND WOULD NOT BE AFFECTED BY SUPERFICIAL "SCRATCHES" OCCASIONED BY CURRENT ARAB DIFFERENCES. HE NOTED THAT HE HAD REFUSED TAKE PUBLIC ISSUE WITH IRAQ'S DECISION TO WITHDRAW ITS AIRCRAFT SQUADRON FROM EGYPTIAN FRONT WHILE OCTOBER FIGHTING WAS STILL IN PROGRESS AND THAT "I STOOD THANKING IRAQ IN PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY DESPITE ALL THE DEADLY ATTEMPTS NOW BEING MADE BY THE IRAQI GOVT. TO RESUME THE STRUGGLE (WITH ISRAEL)". SADAT ALSO SAID THAT WHEN LIBYA STOPPED SENDING OIL TO EGYPT "UNDER THE PRETEXT THAT WE DESERTED THE BATTLE AND IN IGNORANCE OF THE NATURE OF OUR STRUGGLE", ALGERIA AND SAUDI ARABIA HAD KEPT UP OIL SUPPLIES "IN EXCESS OF THEIR PREVIOUS COMMITMENTS". RE SHAZLI CONTROVERSY, SADAT CLAIMED THAT ON OCTOBER 19 HE HAD UNCLASSIFIED

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ENTRUSTED SHAZLI WITH MISSION OF ENCIRCLING ISRAELI FORCES WHICH HAD CROSSED AT DEVERSOIR, ONLY TO FIND THAT SHAZLI HAD "COLLAPSED" AND WAS INSISTING THAT EGYPT MUST WITHDRAW ALL HER FORCES FROM CANAL'S EAST BANK. SADAT SAID HE IMMEDIATELY REPLACED SHAZLI WITH GAMASY, BUT LATER DECIDED TO APPOINT SHAZLI AS AMBASSADOR TO LONDON IN RECOGNITION OF HIS EARLIER ROLE IN MASTERMINDING BREAKTHROUGH OF BAR-LEV LINE.

4. OTHER SIDE OF CONTINUING EGYPTIAN-SOVIET PROPAGANDA BATTLE WAS UPHELD HERE APRIL 20 BY MOSCOW-CONTROLLED LEBANESE COMMUNIST PARTY WEEKLY, AL AKHBAR, WHICH PUBLISHED LENGTHY LEAD ARTICLE DRAWING INVIDIOUS COMPARISONS BETWEEN SYRIAN DEFENSE AND EGYPTIAN DESERTION OF ARAB CAUSE. AKHBAR TOOK VIOLENT ISSUE WITH "CAIRO CIRCLES WHICH LEAK ACCUSATIONS" THAT SYRIAN-SOVIET HARDLINE IS PLACING OBSTACLES IN WAY OF ME SETTLEMENT. SYRIAN-SOVIET STAND, ACCORDING TO AKHBAR, IS SIMPLY IN OPPOSITION TO "AMERICAN-ISRAELI SETTLEMENT" AND TO "THOSE WHO CRAWL AFTER SUCH SETTLEMENT". MAGAZINE CLAIMED DIFFICULTIES IN GOLAN ARE CREATED SOLELY BY US AND ISRAEL AND ASKED "SINCE WHEN IS IT SOVIET DUTY TO DESERT SYRIA IN ORDER TO SATISFY PROPONENTS OF AMERICAN SETTLEMENT?" GOLAN PROBLEM, HUFFED AKHBAR, BECAME MORE DIFFICULT "BECAUSE EGYPT ABANDONED SYRIA IN DISENGAGEMENT TALKS WITH ISRAEL UNDER PRETEXT OF 'STEP-BY-STEP' POLICY WHICH SACRIFICES ARAB INTERESTS TO THOSE OF US AND ISRAEL. HAD THERE BEEN FAITHFUL EGYPTIAN ATTACHMENT TO GOLAN AND PALESTINIAN RIGHTS, SITUATION WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER BY NOW".

5. AKHBAR ARTICLE WENT ON TO PRAISE ARAB DEPENDENCE ON SOVIET UNION AS "ONLY COUNTRY EFFECTIVELY SUPPORTING ARABS IN PEACE AND WAR, PARTICULARLY IN BATTLE AGAINST ISRAEL AND ITS PROTECTOR." MAGAZINE SAID SOVS WORK TO PREVENT AND PROTECT ARABS AGAINST "THE AMERICAN PEACE--I.E., THE SURRENDER SETTLEMENT", AND CASTIGATED ARAB CRITICS OF SOVIET UNION FOR PINNING HOPES ON CHANGE IN US/ME POLICIES WHICH HAVE YET TO MEET ACID TEST. IT CONCLUDED: "IF GOLAN 'DIFFICULTIES' CONSTITUTE OBSTACLE TO KISSINGER-FAHMI ENDEAVORS, WHICH ABOUT 'DIFFICULTY' OF THE PALESTINIANS?...QUESTION OF PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE AND RIGHTS OF PALESTINIAN PEOPLE HAS BEEN INFLAMED BY KIRYAT SHEMONA OPERATION. ARE WE NOW GOING TO HEAR COMPLAINTS OF ANOTHER 'HARDLINE' BY PALESTINIANS AND SOVIET UNION, SIMPLY BECAUSE LATTER STRONGLY SUPPORTS LEGITIMATE PALESTINIAN RIGHTS?"

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